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La traducción del humor en textos audiovisuales: análisis de la adaptación de referentes culturales y juegos de palabras en *Los Simpson*

Translation of humour in audiovisual texts: analysis of the adaptation of cultural references and wordplay in *The Simpsons*

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to analyse the translation of humour in audiovisual texts. More specifically, it addresses the translation of cultural and linguistic elements in the context of a sitcom, focusing on the adaptation of cultural references, wordplay and humour derived from the combination of a spoken or written message and a visual element. This paper will provide the reader with a theoretical background based on previous researches, as well as the strategies used by translators when dealing with these aspects. For the purpose of the analysis, examples in both the original version and the dubbed version of selected scenes of the TV series *The Simpsons* have been studied. On the basis of the analysis conducted, this dissertation aims to illustrate how these elements are translated from English into Spanish using the strategy of adaptation in an attempt to maintain the intended humorous effect.

El objetivo de este Trabajo de Fin de Grado es analizar la traducción del humor en textos audiovisuales. En particular, examina la traducción de elementos culturales y lingüísticos en el contexto de las comedias de televisión, centrándose en la adaptación de referentes culturales, juegos de palabras y humor derivado de la combinación de un mensaje hablado o escrito y un elemento visual. Este trabajo proporciona al lector una base teórica basada en investigaciones previas, así como las estrategias utilizadas por los traductores al abordar estos aspectos. Para el análisis, se ha llevado a cabo el estudio de ejemplos de escenas seleccionadas de la serie de televisión *Los Simpson*, tanto en su versión original como en su versión doblada. A partir del análisis realizado, este trabajo pretende mostrar cómo se han traducido estos elementos de inglés a español con el objetivo de intentar mantener el efecto humorístico buscado.

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1. Introduction

Humour has always been considered one of the major challenges for translators, especially when it comes to translating extralinguistic elements rooted in a specific culture. Nowadays, most of the humorous audiovisual texts broadcast on Spanish television are imported from English-speaking countries, especially the United States. Thus, these media products have to be translated for a target audience with a different cultural background to understand it. The translation of humour requires a deep understanding not only of both languages but also of the source culture and the target culture in order to deal with the challenges posed by culture-specific limitations and hence, be able to achieve the same effect produced by the original text in the translation.

This dissertation aims to analyse the complexities of the translation of humour in audiovisual texts, focusing on three recurrent aspects regarding this type of translation: cultural references, wordplay and humour derived from the combination of a spoken or written message and a visual element. This dissertation will provide the reader with a theoretical background based on previous researches, as well as the strategies used by translators when dealing with these aspects. Focusing on the translation of the TV series *The Simpsons*, this paper aims to analyse both the original version and the dubbed version of selected scenes in order to illustrate how these elements are translated from English into Spanish in an attempt to maintain the intended humorous effect.

2. Audiovisual translation

It is a matter of fact that in the twenty-first century, the media is omnipresent. According to Cintas (2008), the traditional television programmes or cinema guides have witnessed a great growth in the last two decades and hence, the media needs for audiovisual

translation in most countries. Various factors have contributed to this growth, including the appearance of a larger number of television channels at all levels: international, national, regional and local. This has led to an increase in the quantity and range of programmes required to meet the needs of broadcasting schedules. Apart from the traditional films, television series, cartoons, sitcoms, documentaries and soap operas, there is a current growth in the need to provide and supply more audiovisual material for new channels (from cookery, travel, fashion, interviews, awards ceremonies to political speeches). These audiovisual programmes are broadcast by television channels, distributed on DVD or available on the Internet, given the many ways in which viewers can access audiovisual material. As reported by Gambier (2010), the globalisation of audiovisual distribution and production systems, the financial integration of television broadcasting companies and the film industry, digitisation and related technological developments such as the expansion of the Internet are some of the developments that majorly impacted the audiovisual landscape. Thus, the proliferation of audiovisual texts has led to a corresponding greater need for audiovisual translation.

According to Cintas (2008), audiovisual translation has existed as a professional practice for many years, but it is since the 1990s that has gained well-deserved visibility due to the proliferation and distribution of audiovisual texts in our society. Therefore, audiovisual translation is a field that has been growing in significance in the recent decades, being its main function to allow audiovisual programmes to travel across linguistic borders. As stated by Remael (2010), an audiovisual text is a text in which both audio channels and visual channels, as well as verbal and non-verbal codes, are active in producing meaning. Hence, translators of this type of texts do not deal only with the text but also with other aspects. Audiovisual translation is regarded as the

transfer from one language into another of the verbal components contained in audiovisual texts and products. The synchronisation of verbal and nonverbal components is what makes the task of translating audiovisual texts especially complex (Matkivska, 2014). Cintas (2009) states that the translator has the important but difficult task of bridging the gap between the two cultural systems involved in the translation process. This becomes even more challenging when they also have to comply with the media limitations. Thus, the role of the translator is not only to transfer a text into another text in a different language, but also to act as a mediator in a process of intercultural communication.

2.1. Dubbing

As reported by Chaume (2004:31), "audiovisual translation modes should be understood as the technical means used to perform the linguistic transfer of an audiovisual text from one language to another". Different audiovisual translation modes are created and distributed in the different countries according to the broadcasting media, but also according to the audience preferences and needs (Gambier, 2004). However, despite the emergence of new audiovisual translation modalities in the last decades, subtitling and dubbing are still considered the two main audiovisual translation modes. Regarding Spain, dubbing seems to be the most widespread translation type (Cabrera & Bartolomé, 2005).

According to Gambier (2010), dubbing involves replacing the original soundtrack containing the actor's dialogue with a recording in the target language that reproduces the original message. This practice ensures that the sounds in the target language and the actors' lip movements, as well as other visual cues of the original, are synchronised.

As a result, the original soundtrack may be totally replaced by a new one in the target language, which means that the target audience can no longer perceive any trace of the original message. Nevertheless, this audiovisual translation mode is virtually restricted to the translation of films, television series and sitcoms, children's programmes and the sporadic commercial, since it is a practice that implies high costs and a complex process in which many professionals are involved.

3. Translation of humour

An audiovisual text provides a cultural representation of the world, both through language and the image. Cintas (2009:44) states that "translators mediate between two linguistic and cultural systems and need not only a bilingual ability but also a bi-cultural vision". According to Chiaro (2010), laughter and smiling are regarded as universal expressions linked to humour. However, it seems that problems with conveying verbal humour appear when language interferes and hence, its translation becomes a challenge. Humour has to come to terms with linguistic and cultural elements which are only typical of the source culture as it crosses geographic boundaries. These linguistic and culture-specific features include references to history, customs or people of a particular culture as well as words or phrases with more than one meaning and wordplay. As stated by Ritchie (2010), not all instances of humour work equally well in all settings and jokes that are hilarious in one country may be incomprehensible in another. This is because the comprehension of any particular instance of humour requires the recipient to have specific knowledge about the world, or by particular cultural assumptions.

In an attempt to provide a classification of the different instances of humour given in audiovisual texts and in line with Zabalbeascoa's (1996) previous classification,

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Martínez Sierra (2003) distinguishes seven types of jokes: *intercultural jokes*, whose comic effect does not depend neither on a specific-language wordplay nor on the familiarity with certain aspects of a culture; *community-institutional jokes*, which include elements significantly rooted in a specific community and require the adaptation of the national, cultural or institutional references of the source text in order to maintain the humorous effect in the target audience; *community-cultural jokes*, referring to those jokes that seem to be more popular in certain communities, not depending on specific references but rather on "the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people " (Samovar & Porter, 1997:12-13); *language dependent jokes*, based on purely linguistic aspects; *visual-linguistic jokes*, which include instances of humour derived from the combination of the verbal and the visual element; *paralinguistic jokes*, in which humour is derived from paralinguistic elements such as a foreign accent, a tone of voice or the imitation of the way of speaking of a famous character; and *complex jokes*, which allow for those jokes that combine two or more of the previously stated elements.

Therefore, the translation of humour appears to be a difficult task, becoming even more problematic when it occurs in audiovisual texts such as films and sitcoms. It would appear that translated versions of many comic audiovisual texts are unsuccessful outside their source culture. A reason for this may be that the target audience may not be familiar with a cultural reference upon which a gag is articulated. Nevertheless, in cases in which humour is purely verbal and it is not dependent on visual elements on screen, the quality of the translation plays an important role in the success or failure of the

humorous effect (Chiaro, 2007). Chiaro (2010) states that the comic effect is achieved in both the source and the target text receivers when the translation takes the form of a complete reformulation of the joke. This happens when the translator creates a humorous situation as a substitute for something in the source text that would be incomprehensible for the target audience. That is, the translator may introduce verbal and cultural references close to the target receivers' cognitive background, in a successful attempt to prioritise the text's objective, that is, achieve the comic effect and make people laugh. This is related to the concept of domestication, first introduced into modern Translation Studies by Lawrence Venuti (1991, 1995, 1998), which is concerned with the adaptation of the cultural context or culture-specific terms rather than preserving the original cultural context. According to Venuti (1995:20), domestication refers to "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bring the author back home", as opposed to foreignization, "an ethnodeviant pressure on those (cultural) values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad". Generally speaking, domestication designates the type of translation in which fluent and transparent strategies are adopted in order to minimise the strangeness of the foreign text for target readers (Shuttleworth & Cowie 1997:59).

3.1. Cultural references

Humour can be expressed in many different ways. The presence of references alluding specific features of a culture becomes of vital importance in the creation of humour, since a text is always tangled in a web of references not only to other texts but also to other cultural and social codes (Cintas, 2009). For this reason, the translator has to pay

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special attention to these references, considering that a cultural reference may not exist in the same way in the target culture as it exists in the source culture. Some references have become so popular in certain cultures that have been included as a part of their own cultural heritage and hence, they can be translated easily into the target language. Nevertheless, there are others whose translation involves greater difficulty because of their degree of specificity (Branchadell, 2005).

Therefore, the translator is required to have culture-specific knowledge about both the source and the target culture, but also to possess the creative ability to work out equivalents of meaning in the target language and culture in an attempt to produce similar connotations to the original. Thus, the strategy of adaptation is often necessary when translators are dealing with the transfer of cultural references in order to be more accommodating to the target audience's background (Cintas, 2009). In this respect, it is essential to take into account the Skopos Theory, which is believed to be one of the translation theories that best explains the reasons why a translator sometimes has to adapt the source text to the context of the target audience. The Skopos Theory (Reiss & Vermeer, 1984) argues that the shape of the target text must be determined by the function that this text is meant to perform in the target context. That is, it focuses, above all, on the purpose of the translation, being the prime principle determining any translation. More often than not, the source text is oriented to the source culture, but a different target audience may lack the knowledge naturally assumed by the source audience and hence, they may not fully comprehend the text. This means that the translator cannot offer the same kind of information as the source-text producer. For this reason, the translator should offer this new audience a target text whose composition is oriented towards the assumed knowledge that the target community has. According to

Cintas (2009), the skopos of a translation determines the strategies that translators may use for reaching the intended goal. They can depart from the original text and consider how best to convey the meaning of the text adjusting to what they believe are the needs of the target audience. As stated by Chiaro (2010:9),

> as long as the target text serves the same function as the source text, and in the case of humour, that function would be to amuse the recipient, it is of little importance if the target text has to depart somewhat in formal terms from the original.

3.1.1. Translation strategies for cultural references

Tomaszkiewicz (1993:223-227) offers a brief discussion of the strategies employed in audiovisual translation when a culture-specific term is used in the dialogue. These strategies are omission, whereby the cultural reference is omitted altogether; literal translation, where the solution in the target text matches the original as closely as possible; borrowing, where an original term of the source text is used in the target text; equivalence, where the translation of the term has a similar meaning and function in the target culture; adaptation, where the translation is adjusted to the target language and culture in an attempt to evoke similar connotations to the original; replacement of the cultural term with deictics, especially when supported by an on-screen visual clue; generalisation, where the original term is translated into a more general or ample term; and explication, which usually involves a paraphrase to explain the cultural term.

3.2. Wordplay

Humour generated in the form of words and phrases with more than one meaning and distinctive references to a particular culture are characteristics that often constitute the basis of wordplay. Since different languages have different meaning-form distributions, wordplay creates problems of translatability, and it is precisely this type of

humour that plays on both linguistic and cultural features that is the most arduous to translate (Chiaro, 2010). Delabastita (1996:128) defines wordplay as

> the general name for the various textual phenomena in which structural features of the language(s) used are exploited in order to bring about a communicatively significant confrontation of two (or more) linguistic structures with more or less similar forms and more or less different meanings.

For Delabastita (1996), one condition for wordplay to emerge is similarity of forms. This means that linguistic phenomena can share a similar form: identical sounds and spelling (homonymy); identical sounds but different spellings (homophony); different sounds but identical spelling (homography); or slight differences in both spelling and sound (paronymy). These similar forms may be contrasted to create ambiguity and, therefore, to produce humour out of their different meanings. However, it seems that another necessary condition for a wordplay to emerge is an appropriate context. According to Delabastita (1993:72-73), this appropriate context should be related to human knowledge and the expectations of grammatical texts (verbal context) and/or should go in line with the actual situation in which an utterance occurs (situational context). Moreover, a common claim concerning wordplay is that it is a linguistic device used for entertainment. Crystal (2006:176) states that wordplay, by means of "blending and breaking the rules of the language", involves non-conventional manipulation of linguistic forms, and its function is merely to be enjoyed.

As Delabastita (2004) indicates, the structural and typological dissimilarity of source and target text language increases the untranslatability of wordplay. Chiaro (2010:8) argues that more often than not, "the problem with translating humour is that it is 'untranslatable' in the sense that an adequate degree of equivalence is hard to achieve". For this reason, when dealing with wordplay, being able to pun on the same

item in two different languages is extremely improbable and therefore, the translator may need to translate the type of wordplay of the source text into another type in the target text. This compensation implies a substitution with an instance of wordplay which was not present in the source text, that is, some feature of the source text is lost in exchange for a gain in the target text.

3.2.1. Translation strategies for wordplay

Chiaro (2010) provides four different strategies adopted by translators when it comes to translating wordplay. The first one is leaving the verbal humour unchanged, which implies a word-for-word rendition of the source text. The result would be that the wordplay is completely lost in an attempt to conform formal equivalence and hence, it simply passes unnoticed as an instance of humour. The second one involves replacing the verbal humour in the source text with a different instance of verbal humour in the target language. That is, the translator can choose to substitute the wordplay in the source text with an example of wordplay in the target language in an attempt to retain the verbal humour of the original. According to Chiaro (2010), this is the ideal strategy because the target audience will have the satisfaction of experience verbal humour. The third one involves replacing the verbal humour in the source text with an idiomatic expression in the target language. Although idioms are not actually funny, they may possibly enhance the target text in a similar way to wordplay. The result may be slightly odd but recognisable as an attempt to create humour. Finally, the last strategy involves ignoring the wordplay altogether. This may be a feasible strategy as the target audience is unlikely to know that the source text contained verbal humour. However, the humorous effect intended by the original text would be inexorably lost.

3.3. The visual element

The combination of the acoustic and visual channels, together with the verbal and nonverbal elements, constitutes the distinctive feature of audiovisual texts and conditions the whole translation process. For this reason, the translator has to be able to transmit to the target text the elements of the source culture that may be implicit or explicit in the original text, taking into account not only the image but also the target culture where these elements are to be interpreted (Branchadell, 2005).

Considering those instances of humour which combine linguistic elements with visual elements on screen, Martínez Sierra (2003) proposes a new category of jokes that was previously ignored: *visual-linguistic jokes*. This category would include humour derived from the combination of a spoken or written message and a visual element. If verbally expressed humour is difficult to translate, the task becomes even more complicated when other semiotic dimensions have to be considered. Humour which relies on visual representation on screen may pose a challenge for the audiovisual translator. This is because the visual element can be regarded as an advantage for the translator when the image illustrates and supports the verbal message; or indeed as a restriction when it contradicts what is being said, perhaps with comic or ironic effect. Hypothetically, the target text must maintain the cohesion of the information supplied simultaneously by the two channels, audio and visual. However, since the image cannot be manipulated, the translation will require a higher degree of manoeuvring in order to achieve the humorous effect equivalent to that of the source text (Cintas, 2009).

4. Corpus and contextualisation

For the purpose of the analysis of the translation of humour in audiovisual texts, the corpus that will be used is the TV series *The Simpsons*. *The Simpsons* is an American animated sitcom created by Matt Groening. The series actually has an ambiguous nature. In addition to providing a humorous insight into the life of a typical American family, it is a satirical depiction of working-class life, embodied by the Simpsons family, which consists of Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and Maggie. It can also be regarded as a parody of American culture and society, television, and the human condition. Since its release in 1989, 679 episodes have been broadcast. It is the longest-running American sitcom, and the longest-running American scripted primetime television series, both in terms of seasons and number of episodes.

The translation of the series into Spanish has been carried out independently by María José Aguirre de Cárcer. The translator has striven to remain faithful to the original text. Nevertheless, more often than not, the literal translation of certain elements of the source text would be incomprehensible in the target language and the humorous effect would be lost. In these cases, the task of the translator has been to adopt certain strategies to alter the original meaning of the message in an attempt to preserve the comic effect. Thus, this dissertation will deal with the strategies that have been used in the translation that make *The Simpsons* equally successful in the source culture but also in the Spanish culture. The strategy commonly used by the translator and in which this dissertation will focus mostly is adaptation.

Finally, the examples of the corpus analysed in this dissertation have been extracted from seasons 1, 15 and 17. Moreover, they are divided into three groups focusing on examples of cultural references, wordplay and examples of both cultural

references and wordplay derived from the combination of a spoken or written message and a visual element.

5. Analysis of examples from *The Simpsons*

5.1. Examples of cultural references in *The Simpsons*

In *The Simpsons* we encounter a multitude of cultural references that are clearly detected by the audience of the source culture, but obtaining the same result in the target receivers is considered a challenge for the translator. However, this challenge has been overcome by using the strategy of adaptation and hence, achieving the expected effect on the target audience.

EXAMPLE 1.

The following example belongs to season 1, episode 1, "Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire". It is important to mention that the title of this episode is a cultural reference itself, apart from a wordplay. The title is a reference to the first line of "The Christmas Song", a classic Christmas song written in 1945 by Robert Wells and Mel Tormé, which goes «*Chestnuts roasting on an open fire*». Taking into account that this song is unknown in the target language, the reference would not be detected by the target audience. Therefore, the translator chooses the popular Spanish carol "Blanca Navidad" and it is adapted in order to achieve the desired effect. That is, the original title plays on the Simpsons family name and the Christmas song, and it has the negative connotation of being «roasting on an open fire». As a result, the title was translated into "Sin Blanca Navidad".

[Season 1], ["Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire"]
[00:15:48-00:15:53]

Humorous element: Community-institutional joke.	
OV: **Bart:** It happened to Tiny Tim, it happened to Charlie Brown, it happened to the Smurfs and it's gonna happen to us.	**DV:** **Bart:** Le pasó a Oliver Twist, le pasó a Peter Pan, les pasó a los Pitufos y nos pasará a nosotros.
Cultural references: Tiny Tim, Charlie Brown and the Smurfs.	**Cultural references:** Oliver Twist, Peter Pan and los Pitufos.
Cognitive background: <u>Contextual case (CC)</u>: Bart is trying to convince Homer that a miracle will save the Simpsons' Christmas, as miracles always happen to poor kids at Christmas.	

Comments:

In this scene, according to Martínez Sierra's classification of jokes, we encounter a *community-institutional joke*. That is, it includes elements significantly rooted in a specific community and their adaptation is required in order to maintain the humorous effect in the target audience. In this case, it is a reference to some well-known characters in the source culture, but they would probably be unrecognised in the target culture. In an attempt to avoid strangeness, the translator decides to follow the domestication approach, replacing the original cultural reference with another cultural reference close to the target receivers' cognitive background. Tiny Tim is a fictional minor character from the novel *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. As he is probably not so widely known in Spain, this character is replaced by another of the Charles Dickens' characters, Oliver Twist, which could be more recognisable among the Spanish audience. Moreover, these two characters may bear a resemblance as both of them are regarded as child representatives of poverty in the England of the nineteenth

century. It is also the case with Charlie Brown, a character of the American comic strip *Peanuts*, which was unknown in Spain at the time that this chapter was broadcast in 1989. This is the reason why the translator opted for Peter Pan, a world-renowned character popularised by Walt Disney Productions in 1953. Nevertheless, *The Smurfs* does not require an adaptation, as they are popular in both cultures and has a coined translation.

EXAMPLE 2.

[Season 17], ["Bart Has Two Mommies"]	
[00:04:48-00:05:00]	
Humorous element: Community-institutional joke.	
OV: **Ned:** I'm so glad you're watching the boys, Marge. Our last babysitter let them watch Comedy Central. Now Rod majes me check the closet every night for Rita Rudner.	**DV:** **Ned:** Me alegro de que seas tú quien se ocupe de los niños. La última canguro los dejó ver la MTV y ahora Rod me obliga a mirar debajo de su cama por si está Michael Jackson.
Cultural References: Comedy Central and Rita Rudner.	**Cultural References:** MTV and Michael Jackson.
Cognitive background: • <u>Contextual case (CC)</u>: Marge is going to babysit Ned Flanders' children, Rod and Todd, who are not allowed to do many activities since Ned cares for them too much.	

Comments:

In this scene, we can detect a cultural reference that constitutes a *community-institutional joke*. In this example, the reference relies on an American TV channel which was popular in the United States, but it had not expanded to Spain at the time that this chapter was released in 2006. It is the case of Comedy Central, an American pay-

per-view TV channel launched in 1989 and geared for mature audiences which carries comedy programming. It was not until 2014 that this channel expanded to Spain. This is the reason why the translator opted for an adaptation of this cultural reference, replacing Comedy Central with MTV, a sister channel which, considering that it was being broadcast in Spain since 2000, would be recognisable by the target audience. MTV is an American cable channel which originally aired music videos, but eventually toned down its focus on music in favour of reality programming targeting teenagers and young adults. It is the channel's target audience what constitutes the joke, since Ned Flanders' children are eight and ten years old, and consequently, they are not supposed to watch them. Moreover, Rita Rudner is an American comedian who performed on a variety of programmes, including stand-up comedy specials in Comedy Central. Nevertheless, as these programmes were not broadcast in Spain, Rita Rudner would probably be unrecognised by the target audience. In line with the choice of MTV as the adaptation of the previous cultural reference, the translator opted for replacing Rita Rudner with Michael Jackson, whose music videos are frequently aired in the MTV channel. Therefore, since Michael Jackson is regarded as a global figure in popular culture, the cultural reference is detected by the target audience and the humorous effect intended by the original text is maintained in the target text.

EXAMPLE 3.

[Season 17], ["See Homer Run"]
[00:03:20-00:03:30]
Humorous element: Community-institutional joke.

OV:	DV:
Homer: Bart, this is the greatest present I ever received. To open another gift would be like following the London Philharmonic with Jessica Simpson. What you got, Lisa?	**Homer:** Bart, es el mejor regalo que he recibido nunca. Abrir otro regalo ahora sería como si Julio Iglesias cantara después de la Filarmónica de Londres. ¿Qué me traes, Lisa?
Cultural References: The London Philharmonic and Jessica Simpson.	**Cultural References:** La Filarmónica de Londres y Julio Iglesias.
Cognitive background: • Contextual case (CC): Homer is opening the gifts that Marge, Bart and Lisa have bought him on Father's Day. He is impressed by Bart's gift.	

Comments:

In this scene, we encounter a *community-institutional joke* which relies on the comparison of two cultural references which function as a metaphor of the gifts that Homer is opening. In this case, the cultural references rely on music. Bart's gift is compared with the London Philharmonic, as if it was insurmountable. The London Philharmonic Orchestra is regarded as one of the world's finest symphony orchestras, balancing a long and distinguished history and enjoying great success on a global scale. As it is internationally renowned, it serves the same function of the original text in the target text, and hence, it does not require an adaptation. This is not the case of Jessica Simpson. Jessica Simpson is an American singer who started debuting in 1999 in the United States, and became known when she appeared on a MTV reality show between 2003 and 2005. However, during her earlier career, she enjoyed commercial success at a national level. Even though this cultural reference may be detected by a certain part of the target audience, it might pass unnoticed in the majority of cases. Therefore, the translator decides to follow the domestication approach for a better understanding,

replacing the original cultural reference with another cultural reference close to the target receivers' cognitive background. As a result, Jessica Simpson is replaced by a Spanish singer, Julio Iglesias, who is recognised as the most commercially successful Continental European singer in the world and is clearly identified by the Spanish audience. As the joke relies on the comparison of the London Philharmonic Orchestra with a commercially successful pop singer, the adaptation of the cultural reference serves the same function in the target text and hence, achieves the humorous effect equivalent to that of the source text.

5.2. Examples of wordplay in *The Simpsons*

Apart from cultural references, in *The Simpsons* we also encounter a large number of wordplays that require great skill and creative ability to deal with their translation. The following examples show how the strategy of adaptation is used by the translator, replacing the verbal humour in the source text with a different instance of verbal humour in the target language in an attempt to achieve the expected effect on the target audience.

EXAMPLE 1.

[Season 1], ["Homer's Night Out"]	
[00:08:25-00:08:37]	
Humorous element: Language dependent joke.	
OV: **Bart:** Cross your heart and hope to die? Stick a needle in your eye? Jam a dagger in your thigh? Eat a horse manure pie?	**DV:** **Bart:** ¿Me lo juras por el cielo? ¿Por la tumba de tu abuelo? ¿Por tu madre y por tu pelo? ¿Por un Fresisuis con hielo?

Wordplay: Based on the rhyming words "die", "eye", "thigh" and "pie".	**Wordplay:** Based on the rhyming words "cielo", "abuelo", "pelo" and "hielo".
Cognitive background: • <u>Contextual case (CC)</u>: Bart puts his new spy camera to use when Homer is at a bachelor party, and takes him an incriminating photo. Milhouse wants Bart to give him a copy of the photo, and Bart makes him swear that he will not let anyone get another copy.	

<u>Comments:</u>

In this scene, we can detect a *language dependent joke*, since it is based in purely linguistic aspects. In this case, the joke is based on the childish oath «cross your heart and hope to die, stick a needle in your eye». The slogan comes from an old poem in the early 1990s, and it is a way children swear that what they say or promise is completely true and sincere. Moreover, Bart adds two more sentences to put more emphasis on the importance of the oath and hence, the joke also relies on the rhyming words "die", "eye", "thigh" and "pie". However, the literal translation of these sentences would not achieve the same effect on the target audience, since the oath «cross your heart and hope to die, stick a needle in your eye» is not used in the target culture, and the rhyming words used in the original text would not rhyme in the target language. This is the reason why the translator opts for replacing the verbal humour in the source text with a different instance of verbal humour in the target language, which implies a substitution of the wordplay in the source text with an example of wordplay in the target language. When making an oath in Spanish, we commonly use the expression «jurar por algo o alguien». As a result, the translator comes up with «¿Me lo juras por tu abuelo?», and rhymes "abuelo" with "cielo", "pelo" and "hielo" in the sentences that follow. Thus, the

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intended effect of the source text is maintained in the target text, as the target audience clearly detects the wordplay based on the presence of an oath and the rhyming of the words.

EXAMPLE 2.

[Season 1], ["Moaning Lisa"]	
[00:15:05-00:15:18]	
Humorous element: Language dependent joke.	
OV: **Bart:** Is Jacques there? **Moe:** Who? **Bart:** Jacques. Last name Strap. **Moe:** Hold on. Jacques Strap? Hey guys, I'm looking for a Jacques Strap.	**DV:** **Bart:** ¿Está el señor Reves? **Moe:** ¿Quién? **Bart:** Reves, de nombre Stal. **Moe:** Un momento. ¿Alguno de vosotros es Stal Reves?
Wordplay: Based on the phonetic similarity between "Jacques Strap" and "jockstrap".	**Wordplay:** Based on the phonetic similarity between "Stal Reves" and the expression "está al revés".
Cognitive background: • <u>Contextual case (CC)</u>: Bart calls Moe's Tavern asking for a person who does not exist, but whose name is a pun or double entendre. Moe calls for the person's name aloud, and his customers proceed to laugh at his expense.	

<u>Comments:</u>

In this scene, we encounter a *language dependent joke* derived from one of the prank calls that Bart does through the series. Bart calls Moe's Tavern asking for a person who does not exist, but whose name constitutes a wordplay, which Bart hides by saying the last name first when he tells Moe who he's calling for. The joke is revealed when Moe calls for the person's name aloud, saying their first name first, and the last name last. In this case, the joke relies on the phonetic similarity between Jacques Strap and *jockstrap*,

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which is an undergarment for protecting the male genitals during cycling, contact sports or other vigorous physical activity. Nevertheless, the word used in Spanish to refer to this type of undergarment would be «suspensorio», which does not share phonetic similarity with Jacques Strap and hence, the humorous effect derived from the wordplay would be lost in the target text. Therefore, the translator chooses to substitute the wordplay in the source text with a different example of wordplay in the target language in an attempt to retain the verbal humour appearing in the original text. That is, the translator creates a humorous situation as a substitute for something in the source text that would be incomprehensible for the target audience. This is the reason why in the target text, instead of asking for Jacques Strap, Bart asks for «Stal Reves», which corresponds with the expression «está al revés». As in the original text, the wordplay is identified by the target audience when Moe calls for the person aloud, and the humorous effect is maintained.

EXAMPLE 3.

[Season 1], ["There's No Disgrace Like Home"]	
[00:09:06-00:09:12]	
Humorous element: Language dependent joke.	
OV: **Homer:** We're going to say grace first. **Bart:** Okay. Rub-a-dub-dub, thanks for the grub.	**DV:** **Homer:** Primero hay que bendecir la mesa. **Bart:** De acuerdo. Rascataplán, gracias por el pan.
Wordplay: Based on the nursery rhyme rub-a-dub-dub and its rhyme with "grub".	**Wordplay:** Based on the rhyme between "rascataplán" and "pan".

> **Cognitive background:**
> - <u>Contextual case (CC)</u>: Homer realises that his family has a problem when he sees that other families are nice normal people in real life and they do not behave like this only at gatherings. That night, Homer walks in the house and plans that they are all going to eat at the dinner table like a normal family.

<u>Comments:</u>

In this scene, we can identify a wordplay that constitutes a *language dependent joke*. In this example, the joke relies on the nursery rhyme «rub-a-dub-dub» and its rhyme with "grub" used by Bart as a way of saying grace. «Rub-a-dub-dub» is an English language nursery rhyme which exits in many variations, and represents a sound as of a drum being beaten. The translation of this expression into Spanish is «rataplán». However, the translator has transformed it into «rascataplán», which can be regarded as a combination or blending of «rataplán» and «cataplán», a Spanish onomatopoeia that represents the sound that is made when someone hits something. Moreover, "grub" is a slang word for food. In the original version, the word "grub" rhymes with «rub-a-dub-dub», thus creating the humorous effect derived from the wordplay. The translation of "grub" into Spanish could be "papeo" or "manduca", which are slang words in Spanish for "comida". Nevertheless, these words would not rhyme with «rascataplán» in the translated version. Consequently, the translator chooses to substitute the word "grub" with "pan" in the target text, which goes in line with the situational context of saying grace for food and does rhyme with «rascataplán», thus retaining the humorous effect derived from a wordplay.

5.3. Examples of cultural references and wordplay based on visual elements in *The Simpsons*

In *The Simpsons* we encounter a multitude of cultural references and wordplay, and some of them rely on visual representation on screen. The presence of the visual element may pose a challenge for the translator. However, the following examples show how this challenge has been overcome by using the strategy of adaptation and hence, achieving the expected effect on the target audience.

EXAMPLE 1.

[Season 15], [“Simple Simpson”]	
[00:07:56-00:08:05]	
Humorous element: Visual-linguistic joke.	
OV: **Milhouse:** This magazine you sold me isn't ‘Fantastic Four’, it's ‘Fantastic Floor’. My family can't put in floors. We rent.	**DV:** **Milhouse:** Esta revista que me vendió no es ‘Los Cuatro Fantásticos’, es ‘Los cuartos fantásticos’. Mi familia no puede poner parqué, vivimos de alquiler.
Cultural References: The Fantastic Four.	**Cultural References:** Los Cuatro Fantásticos.
Wordplay: Based on the similarity of the words “four” and “floor”.	**Wordplay:** Based on the similarity of the words “cuatro” and “cuartos”.
Cognitive background: • Contextual case (CC): Milhouse wanted a comic book "Fantastic Four", but Comic Book Guy sold him "Fantastic Floor”. Milhouse complains about that, as his family is rent so they couldn't put in floors there.	

Comments:

In this scene, there is a combination of a spoken and written message and a visual element which constitutes a *visual-linguistic joke.* Milhouse is in the comic store complaining about the fact that he wanted a comic book “Fantastic Four”, but the

Comic Book Guy sold him "Fantastic Floor". The comic book is a reference to the Fantastic Four, a fictional superhero team appearing in American comic books. This superhero team is widely known in the target culture and has a coined translation in Spanish, "Los Cuatro Fantásticos". In addition, a close-up of the book "Fantastic Floor" is displayed on the screen, where we can see an empty room with parquet floor on the cover page. In this case, the original text plays on the similarity of the words "four" and "floor", which are contrasted to create ambiguity and, therefore, to produce humour out of their different meanings. Nevertheless, the translation of "floor" into Spanish is "suelo", which does not share similarity with "cuatro". In order to maintain both the cultural reference and the wordplay in the target text, the translator is required to preserve "Los Cuatro Fantásticos" as well as a term related to an empty room with parquet floor, not only for the discourse to make sense, but also because of the visual element on screen. As a result, the translator chooses to replace "floor" with "cuartos" in the target text, playing with the words "cuatro" and "cuartos", which do share similarity of forms, and adapting the text with the visual element on screen.

EXAMPLE 2.

[Season 15], ["Margical History Tour"]	
[00:03:48-00:03:56]	
Humorous element: Visual-linguistic joke.	
OV: **Homer:** I understand. And because you stuck to your principles, I'm going to canonize you.	**DV:** **Homer:** Entiendo. Y por defender vuestros principios, lo que haré sera cañonizaros.
Wordplay: Based on the homophony between "cannon" and "canon" in "canonize".	**Wordplay:** Based on the introduction of the word "cañón" in "canonizaros".

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> **Cognitive background:**
> - Contextual case (CC): Homer plays the role of Henry VIII and wants to get a divorce from Margarine of Aragon, played by Marge. He goes to see Sir Thomas More, played by Ned Flanders, who tells him that he cannot get a divorce as the church does not allow it. Due to Sir More sticking to his principles, Henry VIII "canonizes" him by shooting him out of a cannon.

Comments:

In this scene, we encounter a *visual-linguistic joke* derived from the combination of a verbal and a visual element. Homer, playing the role of Henry VIII, is displayed on the screen shooting Sir Thomas More out of a cannon. In this case, the wordplay relies on the homophony between "cannon" and "canon" in "canonize", which means officially declare a dead person to be a saint, and humour is produced out of their different meanings. However, this homophony does not exist in the target language, as the translation of "cannon" and "canonize" in Spanish are "cañón" and "canonizar" respectively. In an attempt to retain the wordplay in the target text and hence, achieve the expected effect on the target audience, the translator introduces the word "cañón" into the verb "canonizar", resulting in "cañonizaros".

6. Conclusion

To conclude this dissertation, it can be stated that humour is regarded as one of the major challenges for translators, especially when it relies on elements rooted in a specific culture. In order to deal with the challenges posed by culture-specific limitations, the translation of humour requires a deep understanding not only of both languages but also of the source and the target culture. Furthermore, the function that a text is meant to perform in the target context, which in the case of humour would be amusing the recipient, is usually prioritised over the message. This function determines

the strategies that translators may use for achieving in the target text the effect intended by the original text.

After analysing examples of cultural references and wordplay in *The Simpsons*, it can be concluded that this TV series is an example of how the strategy of adaptation has been used by the translator in an attempt to maintain the humorous effect in the target text. As it can be observed in the analysis, the adaptation of cultural references follows the domestication approach, replacing the original cultural reference with another cultural reference close to the target receivers' cognitive background in order to minimise the strangeness of the foreign text for target readers. In the case of wordplay, the strategy of adaptation involves replacing the verbal humour in the source text with a different instance of verbal humour in the target language. As a result, *The Simpsons* has proved to be equally successful in the source culture and in the Spanish culture.

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